



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

P. O. Box 2128
Fort Oglethorpe, GA 30742

706-866-9241 - phone
www.nps.gov

News Release

Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park News Release

Release Date: May 1, 2012

Park Contact: Cathleen Cook, Cathleen.Cook@nps.gov, 423-752-5213 x 115

Additional Contact: Ann Froschauer, Ann.Froschauer@fws.gov, (413) 253-8356; National

White-Nose Syndrome Communications Leader, US Fish and Wildlife Service

White-Nose Syndrome Found in Lookout Mountain Cave

Lookout Mountain, Tennessee: A biologist and volunteers working within the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park collected two tricolored bats in a park cave in Hamilton County, Tennessee, one of which tested positive for white-nose syndrome (WNS). The collected bats represent about 18% of the total number of bats observed in this park cave, and no dead bats were seen. The bats were sent to the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study, where the disease was confirmed by histopathology. White-nose syndrome is a disease caused by the fungus *Geomyces destructans* and is responsible for the recent death of millions of bats in eastern North America. It is named for the white fungus that forms primarily on the muzzle, ears, and wings of infected bats. While the cause of death is unknown, the disease causes bats to become restless during hibernation, moving throughout the cave and burning up fat reserves and potentially losing body water they need to survive the winter. There is no known cure for the disease.

Bats play an important role in natural ecosystems and actually provide services that benefit people, such as eating large amounts of insect pests. The fungus that causes WNS apparently does not pose a health risk to humans; however, park visitors are reminded to not handle bats as they are known to carry other diseases such as rabies. If you see a dead, sick or injured bat within the park, please notify the park at (423) 752-5213.

In 2009 all park caves were closed to the public in an attempt to reduce the chance of importation of the WNS pathogen. White-nose syndrome is transmitted primarily from bat to bat, but fungal spores may be inadvertently carried between caves by humans on clothing or gear. Park caves will remain closed indefinitely to minimize the risk of humans accidentally spreading the disease to other areas.

For more information about white-nose syndrome, visit: <http://www.WhiteNoseSyndrome.org> and http://www.nature.nps.gov/biology/wildlifehealth/White_Nose_Syndrome.cfm

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.